(b) if so, whether after declaration of this area as sub-urban zone the Railways have increased its fare charges upto Dahanu without providing the above mentioned facilities;

(c) if so, whether people have been urging to provide all the required facilities at the earliest; and

(d) if so, whether the Railways have agreed to provide these facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) All the suburban stations fall in category 'C' and minimum passenger amenities as per norms laid down by Ministry of Railway have been provided at all the stations between Churchgate and Dahanu Road except for Vaitoorna. Vaitoorna station also has essential amenities except foot over bridge (FOB) and Platform shelter for which work is in progress. The minimum essential amentieis including drinking water, platform shelter, toilet, booking facilities etc.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Even though minimum essential amenities are available but passengers do demand additional facilities.

(d) The facilities over and above the minimum essential amenities are provided at stations in a phased manner on the basis of number of passengers and importance of the stations.

Rebuilding the damaged coaches

608. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether despite adverse report from the coach manufacturers and protests by Mahalaxmi workshop staff, the Eastern Railway had decided to rebuild five of the seven coaches that were damaged in the serial blasts of 11 July, 2006;

(b) if so, whether the Western Railway is agreeable to get the job done before 11 July, 2007; and

(c) if so, by when the final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Based on detailed inspection and condition of damaged coaches it was decided on Western Railway to rebuild five of the seven coaches that were damaged in the serial blasts on July 11, 2006. There was no proposal under consideration to get these coaches repaired on Eastern Railway.

(b) No, Sir. Only one of the five coaches mentioned in part (a) was rebuilt and put into service by 11 July, 2007.

(c) Till date, four out of the five damaged coaches mentioned in part (a) have been put into service after rebuilding by Western Railway. Repairing of the remaining one coach is under progress.

Promotion of tourist trains

609. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether sensing a great business opportunity in synergizing their resources his Ministry and Ministry of Tourism have decided to join force to jointly market major tourist destinations in the country through appropriate packages;

(b) whether overseas offices of the Tourism Ministry would devise special plans to promote India's tourist trains, Railways is all set to extend the advance booking period for train tickets from 60 days to 90 days as per request from the Tourism Ministry; and

(c) whether Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation would now work in close tandem to jointly promote all tourism trains on the Indian Railways network?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), an extended arm of Indian Railways, is closely working with Ministry of Tourism for promoting tourism packages covering major tourist destinations in India.

(b) and (c) IRCTC is also working closely with the overseas offices of Ministry of Tourism for promotion of tourist trains such as Mahaparinirvan Express and such other Luxury Trains, etc. There are no plans to extend the advance booking period for train tickets from 60 days to 90 days.

Low budget hotels in Punjab

610. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways have identified sites in Punjab, where low budget hotels are proposed to be constructed either by them or by private parties by taking land on lease;

(b) if so, the details of the sites where Railways would be constructing hotels themselves and those where land would be given on lease with its terms; and

(c) by when work on these projects would commence and by when the hotels would become operational, case-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) In order to meet the requirement of the passengers, this Ministry has decided to set up one hundred Budget Hotels all over the Indian Railway network. Out of these, 2 locations *viz.* Ludhiana & Amritsar have been identified in the State of Punjab. The exact sites where these Budget Hotels may be located have not been identified. These hotels will be set up on public private partnership by Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) in the vicinity of the Railway Stations. These hotels will commence after identification of sites, tendering and construction by private operators in all respects.

Extension of facilities to sickle cell patients as thalassemia patients

611. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he is aware that the Sickle Cell Society of India, Nagpur, during November, 2004 had submitted a memorandum requesting for extension of same facilities to sickle cell patients as thalassemia patients;

(b) if so, whether the requested facilities have been provided during the last three years;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) what are the concessions provided by the Railways to sickle cell patients?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Sickle Cell Society of India, Nagpur, has been requesting since 2004 for grant of concession to sickel cell patients.

(b) to (d) Due to financial constraints, sickle cell patients are not being granted concession in fares.